THE KING PREDESTINATE

AND THREE OTHER STORIES

BY

MICHAEL WOOD

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AND THREE OTHER STORIES

"O Heart, O Heart of Life! come nearer, nearer still;
Till I am babe enough to weep and laugh my fill,
And fling the well-worn burden down the hill."

J. A. C.

"From Him are the seeds of all forms; and all forms of seeds."

St Augustine.

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MICHAEL WOOD

AUTHOR OF
"THE SAINT AND THE OUTLAW," "THE FIRE OF THE ROSE,"
"THE GARMENT OF GOD," ETC.

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THE OLD MAN'S STORY

"The standard he setteth up, by that the people go."
Bhagavad Gita.

THE KING PREDESTINATE

I AM not a native of this country (said the old man). I came here when my daughter married a man of this land. And my lad was dead. My son? No, he was not my son. He was my king for the last ten years of his life. Chairman of the Republican Committee before that. He was but forty when he died. If he had lived another twenty years I think he might have built a kingdom the like of which was never seen yet. But perhaps the time was not ripe. When it is ripe perhaps he will come back to earth and finish what he began. And the hearts of men will quiver in answer to the note he strikes, the more easily because it has been struck before, and has trembled into seeming silence. In the land of my birth we had an absolute monarchy; and there were great inequalities of fortune. The king was, as I thought then, a merciless tyrant. The laws were very severe. Both king and nobles were arrogant and lazy; at least, we said and thought so. We dreamed of a kingdom of the people which should make all things equal, fair, and happy. We left human nature out of account? Of course we did. It takes a born ruler, and one God-inspired to boot, to understand that, and take it for his sceptre of power. At last we tried to realise our dream. The preliminaries were unpleasant. That could not be helped. There was a terrible uprising of the poor against the rich, the highly

trained, and the powerful; and those who had ruled went under in a sea of blood. The king fought to the last, but he was taken prisoner, and shot in the market-place as a traitor to the majesty of the people. Then the Republic which was to make all things well was established, and the day of inequalities was over. A Council of Government was established, and it set to work to make new laws. I was one of the councillors, and till I tried to frame just laws I never knew the difficulty of making laws at all, whether just or unjust.

At the Council arose the question of the late king's son, the former heir-apparent. Some were in favour of putting him to death. All would have been so if he had been two or three years older; but he was yet so young, not yet sixteen, that we hesitated. Not even for the good of the Republic did we like, in cold blood, to take the life of a boy. At last we decided he should be given a chance to become an industrious citizen of the Republic. He should be placed in my care and made to work. He should be cured of the faults of arrogance, insolence, laziness, love of pleasure and ease, which we knew were incident to his former position. He should be trained to industry, humility towards the people, and endurance of hardness. If he turned out a reputable citizen he should be allowed to live; if he turned out badly or was a danger to the Republic he should die. Someone inquired whether this rule was to be applied to all citizens? I forget what was decided. It did not seem to be pressing. For most of the people who had, in our judgment, turned out badly we had killed. Nevertheless, it did not perhaps seem quite proper that the former heir to the throne should have a law all to himself. For we had abolished unjust monopolies.

The youth was handed over to my custody three days later. He was a tall, slim, well-made lad; he had a pleasant face and clear, steady eyes. He was dressed in the rough blue frieze and canvas shirt of the peasantry. He probably felt this keenly, we

thought; it was doubtless sheer bravado that made him remark (as he did) that it was a comfortable dress and he liked the colour.

I sat in a chair by the hearth, and bade him stand before me. He obeyed at once.

"Do you know who I am?" I asked severely.

"A member of the Council of Government, I think, sir," he said.

"More than that," I replied. "The guardian appointed for you by the Council. You will have to obey me."

"Certainly," he said. "In any case I should have to obey some one. Why not you?"

"You are not to chatter," said I sternly; "you are to listen to me, humbly and attentively."

"I thought we were all on——" he began. "I beg your pardon!"

I did not ask him to end that sentence. I thought this more prudent.

"The times have changed," I observed. "We will have no more idle persons in this country."

"That will be a very good thing, I suppose?" he asked.

"*I* think so," I replied grimly. "Whether *you* will think so, young gentleman, is another matter."

"I am only a boy," he replied with meekness. "I don't count. But from what I have been taught I should suppose it to be a good thing."

"You do not perhaps realise," I said, "that you will have to work too."

"Of course," he said. "But I have always worked. This will be new work, I suppose, sir?"

"*You* have worked, have you?" said I. "And how, may I ask?"

"Well, my father worked pretty hard," said he coolly, "and

of course I had to work too, to get ready to take his work up. But you have changed all that. I expect I shall have a much easier life than I thought I should have."

The cool and brazen impudence of this enraged me.

"Oh, *will* you?" I replied. "We shall see! Now don't talk nonsense; you don't know what work is, and your father didn't. But you shall learn. Since you've never done a stroke of work in your life, I shall be easy with you at first. But I suppose you can do the work which a girl who comes of the people you despise can do?" I meant to sting him. He grew red.

"Why! I don't despise *anyone*," he said quickly. "What makes you think that?"

"That's not true," I retorted.

He turned crimson.

"I don't tell lies," he said shortly, and his mouth shut as though it would never open again.

"Never mind that," I replied sharply, "you will have to do the work in this house at first; cook, and clean, and chop firewood."

"Oh! to be your servant," he said calmly.

He began looking at the room with extreme interest.

"You've had a very bad servant hitherto, sir," he said. "Why! this place isn't clean."

"You think you can do better, do you?" I said disagreeably.

"Well, really," he replied, "if I can't I shall be thoroughly ashamed of myself. But I think I can."

"We shall see," I said. "You'll begin work to-morrow by getting the breakfast; and now, mind this! if you are lazy, if you show any pride and conceit, or if you are disobedient or impudent, you'll be punished. I shall thrash you."

I looked to see him grow either frightened or insulted and angry, but he only smiled and said:

"Naturally. I shall expect that."

"I see you think I'm threatening what I shall not do," I said.

He opened his eyes in surprise.

"I do not," he answered. "It is very kind of you to warn me beforehand. It's more than my father or my old tutor ever did."

"What do you mean?" I said. "Do you mean to pretend you've ever been thrashed in your life?"

"Why, of course I have," he said calmly. "You know my father wasn't a man to stand any nonsense from me, don't you? He was very strict."

"I know what your father's government of the country was," I said.

"Well! and he governed his son on the same lines. But he had an end in view all the time. He loathed softness. He was hard. But he said I should find life was hard, and I had better get used to it. Do you not know my father was as honest and hard-working a man as there is in the country? He was consistent. He hadn't two laws. He'd one for us and for himself. He had one, and it was a hard one. But he ruled himself and his son and his country by it, and whether it was bad or good he thought it right. You build your Republic on justice, even to kings—don't you?"

Then I looked at him and respected him.

"You are quite right to defend your father," I said. "Let him be, now. He is dead."

"He is dead," he echoed, and I saw the tears rise in his eyes.

"I am sorry," I said. "I did not mean to hurt you."

He bit his lip.

"I shall be all right in a minute," he murmured. "It's only—I was there when they—when he died."

He walked away down the room. I was horror-struck. I had no idea he had seen his father's execution. I followed him.

"That ought never to have been allowed," I said. "That was diabolical."

"They let me say good-bye to him," he faltered. "And he said to me: 'I've been harsh with you sometimes, but you know I loved——'"

Then he broke down altogether.

"I wasn't there," I said gently. "But I ought to have been. I ought to have saved you from seeing that."

"Would you mind not speaking to me for a minute?" he said in a low voice. I walked away and left him alone. Presently he came towards me.

"I never made a scene like that before in my life," he said. "I'm sorry."

"You didn't make a scene," I replied.

"I did," he said shortly. "I played the fool. It's just what my father wouldn't have liked."

"Come upstairs," I answered; "I'll show you your room."

I showed him an attic, with a straw mattrass and some blankets for its only furniture. He looked round the room cheerfully; opened the windows to let in the air; fastened them back and said nothing. But I saw him no longer as the representative of a class I hated, but as a human being. I saw him as a motherless and fatherless lad without a friend to protect him from oppression. I sent him to his attic at nine o'clock. Half an hour later I went to see how he fared. I did not want him to suffer, if I could spare him. The room was full of moonlight. He lay on his mattrass, which he had drawn under the open windows, and he had added a pail of water to the furniture of the room. He sat up, and looked surprised.

"I know this must be a great change for you," I said kindly. "Shall you be able to sleep on that hard bed?"

He poked the bed cheerfully with his finger.

"Hard bed!" he answered. "I don't think it's harder than the one I've slept on all my life. It seems to be made of different stuff, though. What's it got inside it?"

"Shall you be cold here?" I said.

"Why? it's a fairly warm night," he replied. "I've taken one of your blankets and rolled up the rest. You seem to think I've been reared in a hothouse."

"I thought you were used to softness, and warmth, and ease," I said.

"No," he answered. "I've always been brought up simply, to make me strong and hardy. And sometimes I've been made to rough it in good earnest for a week or two. My father said that was one part of the business."

"What business?"

"The trade I was being taught when you stopped my apprenticeship."

"What trade were you being taught?"

"To be a king," he said coolly. "That takes training if you're going to be any good at it. If I needed soft beds, and warmth and ease, how could I do what my grandfather did, if that was my duty?"

For the lad's grandfather had been a great soldier, and led his army in person, and fared as his men fared in the field. I felt a sort of glamour stealing over me. A big idea of a great type.

"You must forget that," I answered sharply. "You are a citizen of the Republic now."

"I hope, sir," he said, "I shan't be a worse citizen of this Republic because I was being trained to try to be a good king."

Something about the boy was warping my principles. I made ready to fly.

"You like to sleep with open windows," I said.

"I do. I like to feel the wind flying through the room."

"You had enough supper, I suppose?" I asked.

"Yes, thank you," he replied. "That rye bread is very good, but it might be better made, I think. Don't you?"

"I daresay," I said feebly. "Shall you sleep?"

"Oh yes," he said. "I never had a bad night in my life."

"Good night, then," I said.

"Good night," he replied, "and thank you. You've been really kind to me. I hope I shall earn my board and lodging."

I went downstairs silently. The next morning, when I went out to milk, I met him coming from the river with a wet towel in his hand.

"You should be at work," said I.

"I have been at work," he answered, gaily. "The room's scrubbed out, and the breakfast is ready. I thought I might have a bathe before breakfast. Do you mind? I'm sorry."

I was no match for him. I wondered whether he ought to be shot in the interests of the nation. The room was clean; he must have risen in the dark to do it, and stepped like a cat. Breakfast was ready. He waited on me cheerfully. I saw a little twinkle in his eyes. As I went out I met my neighbour's wife, who took care of my little girl. I was a widower.

"Long enough might we women wait till you men here saw to your own firing and water carrying, let alone other people's," she said. "Now the king——"

"There's no king here," I said hurriedly. "He's a citizen of the Republic."

"Oh, rubbish!" said she. "But he's chopped my firewood, and carried the water for my little girl. He took the pails out of the child's hands. And such pretty manners! He's a pattern to——"

I went away. I did not know what was to become of us if he had the women on his side.

He waited on me politely at dinner and supper; in the evening he weeded the garden, whistling cheerfully and playing with my girl; the child trotted about after him like a little dog. The next day I could stand his waiting on me no longer. I felt

nervous. "Sit down and eat with me," I said; "this is pure nonsense."

"May I?" he answered. He fetched a plate and knife and fork. As he sat down he said to himself:

"After all, it *is* more consistently Republican."

The days and months slipped by. I grew to be attached to him. Everything he did, he did well and thoroughly. He never shirked anything; he never lied, or equivocated, or shuffled. He never made excuses for himself, either for faults or failures. He was always cheerful and good-tempered, and he could bind his easily chattering, pleasant tongue with an iron silence when he chose to do it. The rigid and inevitable way in which penalty had followed wilful error or involuntary failure, in his father's training of him, made him a little hard. He hid all emotion; he bowed to the law of cause and effect cheerfully, and cast all need of, or demand for, mercy on one side. That made me increasingly gentle with him in my speech and bearing. Then I discovered he was much more affectionate than he seemed to be, and he rather shyly showed me he had a small streak of sensitiveness in him, which his cool, blithe manner carefully hid. He lacked ten months of sixteen when he first came to me; now he was nineteen—a tall, strong, broad-shouldered young man. It struck me sometimes that he was deliberately trying to understand the temper and methods of thought and feeling of the people. I thought he was working very much harder than the Council suspected. But I kept silence. The little children had long worshipped him; he showed his sweeter and gentler side to them. The boys and young men were beginning to follow him, to listen to his opinions, to model their behaviour by his. The women, young and old, sang his praises. I began to wonder whether there was a power unseen who ordered a nation's rulers, either for its weal or ruin. One day I watched him teaching the son of one of my neighbours to fence. He had been working hard all day; but

he had a prodigious capacity for work; and he worked easily and without fuss. I heard him telling his pupil he must always acknowledge a hit, and learn to keep his temper. The boy's father came up and watched; he was a man who hated the royal house in the old king's lifetime.

"Neighbour," he said to me, confidentially, "you know I uphold the Republic, don't you?"

"Surely!" said I. "So do I."

"Yes, yes," he said. "The people, thank God, are supreme. But you know, brother——" he paused.

"Yes?" I said.

"My boy's been much easier to manage since *he* took him in hand," he observed. "And you know he's been trained in our principles; now, hasn't he?"

"What do you mean?" I said.

"I wouldn't have you think my views have changed," he said in a low voice. "But he's a *very* promising citizen, isn't he?"

"I think so," I remarked.

"And you know him well," he answered. "What I feel is—" he jerked his head in the direction of the fencing-master. "*There's* the future—er—Chairman of the Council, eh?"

"I agree with you," I replied.

"Yes, yes," he said, relieved; "we both see it."

One day at the Council, serious question rose concerning my ward. Did I think, it was asked, that this young man, whose popularity and influence were so marked, was a danger to the Republic? I thought he would be the death of the Republic, but I did not say so. I loved the boy; and I wanted to see him on his father's throne. The Republic was not wholly satisfactory. The citizens who had a talent for acquiring other people's portions, whether of the fruitage of their wits or their worldly goods, were coming to the front unduly. And there were many who would not work. I am afraid I lied concerning my lad. When I returned

home I found him standing on the hearth mending a tool. But he was thinking and laughing at one and the same time. I sat down.

"Come here," I said. "I have something important to tell you."

He threw down the tool.

"Well, daddy," he said, "I'm listening."

He had taken thus to address me, and I liked it. I had no son of my own. I told him what had been said in Council.

"Now, my boy," I said, "this is a dangerous position. You'll have to be careful."

"Daddy," he said quietly, "if the Council shoot me as they did my father——"

"I'd nothing to do with it," I said quickly.

"I know you hadn't. You voted against it."

"How do you know that?"

"I do know it. If they shoot me, they'll have the people to reckon with. What did you tell them?"

"*Are* you a danger?" I said, with a counter question.

"Do you want me to put my head in your hands?" he asked.

"It's safe there, laddie," I answered.

He laid his hand on mine for a minute.

"I know that," he said. "Well! I don't believe a scrap in your Republic. But then I don't believe in the Monarchy either, as it was. And I think and think to see if I can find a better way. I think one of the roots of the trouble is the unreal barriers between people."

"What do you mean?"

"Daddy, dear," he said gently (in our wisdom we had sent him to me to learn a Spartan hardness, and the powers had ordained that he learnt the direct opposite—a less rigid law). "Daddy, dear, look at the—do forgive me—the ridiculous notions you had about me. If rulers and ruled don't understand each other at all;

if they think a different thought, speak a different language of brains and hearts, and don't understand each other's standards and aims a bit, how can there be good government? The people are the rulers now; but they don't understand those they rule. When I came here and you told me I despised people and that I lied, *that* pricked me a little. To tell me I must cook for you, and wear blue frieze, and sleep on a straw mattrass, hurt me not at all. Those were the things you thought would hurt my pride more. Do I care for whom I cook? Does it alter my position a hair-breadth? For you I liked to cook; you were so kind to me from the very first night I was under your roof."

He walked up and down.

"If we *could* understand each other," he said. "If we could fit in and work from top to bottom and back again like a smoothly running machine, that is *one!* If people would respect each other's standards, where they don't understand the process of their minds. Do you know why I was laughing when you came in, daddy?"

"No."

"I was sitting on the gate mending this, when a man came to look for you. He was in a rage, and he talked to me as they all do. They haven't learnt to hold their tongues a bit. He has a son, a boy of twelve, who goes to one of your State schools. He got into a scrape, and lied to wriggle out of it. The schoolmaster found him out and caned him for lying. The man asked the schoolmaster's head of the Republic. He said his boy did a natural and reasonable thing to avoid punishment, and he felt the disgrace of being so treated very keenly. I tried to soothe him. I said my father would have had me thrashed within an inch of my life if he'd caught me lying; and if I'd made a fuss, he'd have told me if I couldn't take a punishment decently when I'd earned it, I ought to be thrashed again. And he'd probably have done it."

"Did that soothe him?"

"Not a bit. He was quite firm in his view. And my father would have thought him a sentimental idiot. Now I think opposite views ought to be considered and understood and dealt with. They're all different—the people. But they can be fitted in—like bits of a puzzle—if you see where they belong and what they stand for. *That's* what I'm trying so hard to learn."

I got up.

"Youth's no bar to membership of the Council nowadays," I said. "You'll be on the Council by the time you're twenty, and on the throne before you're thirty. My dear boy, I shall be very glad to see you there. I'll tell the Council you have the interests of the people deeply at heart."

"It's true," he said.

He was on the Council before he was twenty-one, and he was crowned when he was thirty. He built up the most marvellously adjusted system of government, solely from his power of judging the types of men with whom he dealt, and the forces that expressed themselves through them. He had the strange "sense of the unseen," which I think is indispensable to the supremely great ruler; he watched the forces which build and perfect nations as they play through human beings. He broke down barriers between type and type, and class and class, and interpreted each to each, so that they worked together as an ordered whole. He was just, with the justice that springs from intellectual vision. But he died at forty from what we call "an accident."

And I came here.

THE PRIEST'S STORY

"And never yet
Has what thy sister taught me first to see,
This Holy Thing, fail'd from my side."

The Holy Grail.

THE ALCHEMIST

"THESE things are horrible," said the playwright. "They make one believe in the inherent corruption of human nature."

"They're a sign of physical degeneration," said the doctor. "When nations and individuals become decadent they crave strong sensations to make them realise they're alive. Hence things like this."

He threw down the paper, in which was a report of an inexplicable outbreak on the part of a supposedly civilised and undoubtedly educated man shown in the wanton torture of an animal.

"That may be partly true," said the playwright. "But not wholly so. Children do cruel things. Child nations behave inhumanly. Look at the barbarous old laws."

"Excuse me," said the doctor. "There's a difference between doing cruel things and being cruel. Almost every healthy young animal—man or nation—does cruel things. To be cruel is to be morbid and complex and—generally beastly."

The playwright mused.

"I believe you are right," he said. "But I think you are wrong when you put the whole thing down to physical degeneration, and nerves that want strong stimuli. Your 'decadent nation' is sometimes not decadent at all, but a meeting-ground

for the forces which have moulded the past and those which will mould the future races. They're in opposition, but they strive to coalesce; the result (before they do coalesce) is anarchy and mania. As a matter of fact the people you call decadent, and who are certainly diseased and morbid, are often not insensible, but highly strung, and aware of forces that others ignore. Father Anthony, what do you think?"

And he turned to the Head of Brent, as the three sat together on a little heathery hill.

Father Anthony was silent awhile; his eyes had gone a-wandering in some memory land of the past. At last he said:

"I believe you are both right. Almost anything is true from some standpoint or another. But there are some points you miss, I think."

"Now what points?" said the playwright.

"For one thing, these meeting-grounds of past and coming energies of the invisible worlds are often up-springing fountains of the loosed powers of the burning-grounds or rubbish-heaps of the world within the world. For another, you have not considered that there may be true sacraments of the devil: things holy and things unholy are terribly near akin—a hair's-breadth divides them. One can be transmuted into another and back again at a most frightful cost. For a third thing, the root of these matters lies out of sight. They are better not spoken of, and above all, better not thought about. If you will promise me not to dwell on them in thought, I'll tell you a story."

"What possible harm can there be in thinking speculatively of the source of any fact?"

"If the source of a fact lies in hell," said Father Anthony, "would you build a bridge by which the devils could cross to you, unless you were a very powerful exorcist?"

"Tell us the story," said the playwright; and the priest began.

"Fifteen years ago," he said, "I went for a short walking tour in the west of England. I came to a little village by the sea; near it was a true glamour-land—a place where a piece of cliff had fallen, and there was a wonderful wilderness of rent rocks and tangles of bushes and growth which made the still, warm place a garden of the gods. The first time I visited the place I did not enter there, so that I do not know whether the condition of things which I afterwards noticed was then established; but I feel pretty sure it was not, then. The child was too young. He could not have borne it. I saw the place from the cliff, as I went to visit a little ruined shrine and holy well, which I saw marked on my map. I found the shrine, only a heap of stones, and the well beside it, roofed with grey lichen-splashed rock. A little smooth piece of daisied turf was before the well; and as I drew near I saw a young girl kneeling on the turf. She wore a white linen robe; her feet were bare. As I looked at her, her whole body grew translucent, a pure vase of light. Over her heart I saw a white star which shot out seven rays of brightness; in her hand she held a white crystal chalice. Her eyes, which were of a most peculiarly deep vivid blue, were tender and dove-like. Now I should not have been so much surprised at beholding a vision in a holy spot, consecrated by the prayers of many; what followed startled me. I took three paces towards the well. The figure did not vanish, but—it was a girl no longer; and it ceased to be vision, it was fact. It was as though I slid mentally from the represented to the representation; from substance to shadow; from the thing symbolised to the symbol. Kneeling by the well was a boy. He was dressed in white, for he wore white flannels such as hundreds of boys were wearing that day. He had a white flower pinned on his shirt. It was a Madonna lily, rather full blown; he had pinned it on the left side; it was just over the heart. In his hand he held a little tin dipper. He might have been from thirteen to fifteen years old. He was very pale; his face had the profound

gravity one sometimes sees in a three-year-old child; his eyelids were red, as though he had been crying. He had dark hair closely clipped, whereas the hair of the vision was long and flaxen; his eyes were brownish grey, where the eyes of the vision were blue.

"'Would you like some water from the well?' he said to me. 'I have a dipper.'

"'Thank you,' I answered, and he dipped the water and handed it to me.

"'What well is this?' I asked.

"'The Virgin's Well,' he said. 'I don't know what the virgin's name was. She was a saint. A man killed her here, and threw her body into the well. People came here to be washed of their sins; the well did miracles, you see, after that.'

"'Why did he kill her?'

"'Because she didn't want to marry him, and he got angry. He was a robber. Look! these spotted leaves are marked with her blood.'

"'Do you often come here?'

"'Yes. Very often. Will you have some more water?'

"'No, thank you,' I said.

"He rose, gave me the leaves he had picked, and went away down the rough path. I did not see the place again until five years later. At that time I broke down from overwork, and the doctor ordered me three months' complete rest. I went westwards, to the tiny village I visited five years before. There I took a couple of rooms at a little farm on the moor, and sought health.

"One day I walked to the shore, and, pacing along the hard white sands just above the break of the waves, I entered the broken fairyland at the foot of the great grey daw- and gull-haunted cliffs. Directly I entered there I became aware of a most extraordinary influence in the place. I do not think any of the people thereabouts felt it in the definite manner that I did; but it must have had some effect upon them—unrealised perhaps. It

was like being bathed in the waters of a crystal pure river of life. I never felt such utter purity, such profound peace.

"I walked up the narrow broken path, and from a ridge of high ground I saw a whitewashed house, with a thatched roof, and a beautiful cob-walled garden full of roses and madonna lilies, and great bushes of lavender and southernwood. While I stood there I saw a tall man come out, pass through the garden, and climb the path towards me. As he passed me I felt a sensation I never felt before, and hope never to feel again. I am used to all the phases of human sin and folly; but this was not human; it was a blast from the burning grounds of the dark places. He was a tall, finely built man, well dressed, and, I thought, a man of culture and education; he was about fifty years of age. He had blue eyes and reddish hair and beard, the latter very neatly trimmed. But —I could have declared there was round him a thick dark mist; it had a coldness that burnt; it seemed to be of a dull black-red like congealed blood; and it had a horrible blackish violet shimmer in it. I did not see it; but I knew it was there and what it looked like; it swept over me as he passed by, like the fold of a foul garment. I felt sick. When he had passed I went down the path, wondering why that incredible and unearthly foulness had left no trail behind it. The stream of living water seemed to wash its trace away. I passed the lovely, peaceful house and climbed the cliff to the well. As I went I remembered my vision and the boy who had taken its place. I reached the well and stopped involuntarily. A figure was kneeling there, its eyes looking seawards. Do you remember those lines from the 'Holy Grail'?

> 'Eyes . . . .
> Beyond all knowing of them wonderful,
> Beautiful in the light of holiness.'"

"Of course, said the playwright.

"These lines rose in my mind. The figure was that of a young man; he might have sat for Tennyson's Galahad. The

face was the face of the boy I had seen five years before, but it was a transfigured face; the face of my vision shone through it. It was deathly white; I never saw a face so white, nor eyes so tragic; but that was only the outer form, the mask. This strange, rapt face of light shone through it all the time; a face neither man's nor woman's; sometimes the two faces, the outer mask and the inner lamp of light, fused, and I saw both as one—the face of a child in an ecstasy, if you can imagine that. The young man was tall, strong, and finely built, but his face had not aged at all in the five years which had passed. He stood up and smiled.

"'You were here five years ago?' he said.

"'I was,' I replied.

"'So few people come here that I remember them all,' he said.

"'I remember you too,' I answered. 'I have often thought of you. I suppose you live here?'

"'I live at the house below, with my father.'

"'I must have passed your father just now.'

"'I saw you pass him.'

"'Your house is beautifully placed,' I said.

"'Beautifully,' he answered. 'My father bought the land and built it years ago. Are you staying here?'

"'Yes, at the farm above.'

"He said no more. After a pause I said good-night and went home. I asked my landlord who lived at the house in the hollow.

"'Two gentlemen,' he said; 'Mr Clinton, a widower, and Mr Garth, his son. Mr Clinton came to live there seven or eight years ago. Father and son live alone—save for the servants; and they never have visitors.'

"The next day I met Mr Clinton the elder; he spoke to me very civilly. He heard, he said, I was stopping here for my health; would I make use of his garden, in which were hammocks and lounge chairs; and use his sailing boat, if I pleased?

"Strangers do sometimes offer these kind of civilities to parsons on their holidays. I accepted because I wanted to see more of the son. Mr Clinton's manner was that of a well-bred man of the world, and he seemed to be eminently sane and sensible.

"The first day I used his garden he asked me to luncheon. The atmosphere of the place, both house and garden, was very quiet and peaceful. It had an indefinable feeling which one generally attributes to the presence of a woman in a house; but it had a special quality of its own different from that; the words 'the beauty of holiness' rang in my ears all the time. Mr Clinton's manner to his son was pleasant and genial, as though they suited each other. The young man's manner to his father was gentle and quiet; there was in it a respect—as of child to parent—which is going out of fashion nowadays. But the man made me shiver, and the young man's white face filled me with pity. Garth Clinton came and talked with me after luncheon; we spoke of books, and he took me up to his room to see a curious old book about the miracles wrought by 'the Virgin's Well': they were all miracles of spiritual regeneration, by the way. When I entered the room I knew the point, the focus, the spiritual fountain as it were, whence the strange power in the place flowed. The room was whitewashed, carpetless and curtainless. It held only a narrow bed, a deal chair and table, and a crucifix nailed against the wall. But to enter the room was like stepping on to a mountain peak; I could have declared the very physical atmosphere was fine and rarefied. He seemed to be unaware of it; I do not think that if he had realised what the room was like he would have taken me into it. He was not so amusing as his father. Mr Clinton was very witty, very widely read, and thoroughly cosmopolitan. But Garth Clinton was the most delightful person to be with I ever knew. He seemed to make all things well. One night I could not sleep, and I rose and walked over the moors. It was full moon, and as light as day. I wandered through the broken ground to the shore. As I went I

was startled by hearing a gasping moan as though from someone in unbearable agony. I listened; and it came again. I went in the direction of the sound and came upon Garth Clinton. He was on his knees by the side of a great stone; his arms rested upon it, and his head was bowed on them. He was shuddering from head to foot as though some tremendous force which shook every nerve and muscle was touching him from without. It was not as though it were an agony generated from within, which he could check, but as though all that lay in his power was to receive and deal with it when it came. I touched him gently and said, 'Garth.' I had never so addressed him before. He rose; I saw the drops on his brow; his eyes were glazed and dim with agony; his lips were quivering. But around him, as though it flowed from him, was the same atmosphere of unruffled peace and crystal purity. He gave nothing forth of the storm that was shattering him.

"'Are you ill?' I asked. 'Are you in pain?'

"'Ill!' he said in a smothered voice. 'In pain!' He leaned his arm on the rock, hid his face upon it, and shivered.

"'Father Anthony,' he said in a whisper, 'this cup is so bitter I sometimes think—I feel—I cannot drink it. Not to the dregs! Not to the very end!'

"'Garth,' I said, 'why do you stay here? I do not know what form his torture of you takes; but I know he *does* torture you. Why stay here? You are young and strong. You could make your own way.'

"He stood up, and his shivering ceased. He leaned forward and touched with his finger the cross I always wear.

"'Father Anthony,' he said, 'do *you* bid me leave him?'

"I was silent. I never before felt so much ashamed; it was as though our Lord Himself had rebuked me through the lad's lips.

"'Good night,' he said gently. 'Don't speak to me of this when we meet. I'll go in now.'

"With these words he left me. When I returned to London

I heard from the young man sometimes; he was very friendless; I think he liked to feel he could write to me. A year later I received a letter from him which was very brief. It said:

"'My father is dying. He wants to see you. Will you come?

GARTH.'

"Of course I set off at once. The house was sweet with the smell of the sea and wild thyme. Garth met me; his hand was very cold; but his eyes looked like stars, and his white face shone in the dusk.

"'He wants to see you at once,' he said. 'He is quite conscious, but he is very weak.'

"I went into the man's room. The first thing I noticed was that the horrible foulness which used to clothe him as with a garment was gone. He was like a lamp flickering out when the oil that fed it has been drawn away. He took his son's hand gently, stroked it, and said:

"'Leave us, will you, Garth.'

"The young man obeyed; and his father's eyes followed him to the door with a look of affection which I believe was genuine.

"I sat down beside the dying man, and he told me a frightful tale. Briefly it was as follows: After the death of his wife he had gone to live in Paris. He sent his son to school in England and troubled little about him; he neither loved nor hated him particularly. He became engrossed in what he called 'the occult,' and it seems he struck a line of study which opened up some appalling possibilities of the worlds invisible. At last it came to this. Some frightful power of the outer darkness rose up within him and made his body and soul a temple wherein to enact a travesty of one of the holiest sacraments of God. The man believed he had hold of a great secret of Nature. It was in that belief he returned to England and came here to live alone—a real plague-spot of evil—to 'develop his powers,' as he called it. He had his son home for the holidays in the ordinary course, and something about him

suddenly inspired him with the most hellish craving to break, destroy, and torture him. I fancy he was already beginning to 'reap the whirlwind' in his own person. I believe Garth held the key to the white mystery his father was blaspheming. A very narrow line divides seeming opposites. But there may have been another reason; some secret of the darkness.

"The man kept him at home; he seemed to be possessed by an implacable loathing of his only child. His whole delight, his sole occupation, was to gratify an apparently insensate lust for giving him pain. He was diabolically ingenious; he tortured him—not physically, but nervously and mentally. He thwarted his every taste and wish; he stopped his education on the plea that he was going to educate him himself. He plagued him by every device a morbid and depraved mind could devise. The boy lived in a maze of bewilderment and terror. When he began to grow up Clinton became perfectly pleasant; he had never ill-used him physically; and now he was kindly and even indulgent to him; but he deliberately and silently turned the whole of that hellish force which was playing on and through him upon the youth, so that he was bathed in it soul and body. But the spirit of that lad was anchored in the Light that shineth in Darkness—in his heart he never shrank, in his faith he never wavered. He received the whole flood of that poison, and it flowed forth from him again—pure. At last it came to this: the stronger the flood of evil from the man, the purer, mightier, and more perfect the tide of the living waters which poured from the heart of God through his son. The more dross poured into the crucible, the purer the gold that issued therefrom. And this went on until evil was so transmuted into good by that Holy Fire that the tide slackened, the force was withdrawn, and with the force the man's individual life flickered out. He looked at me.

"'Father Anthony,' he said, 'I've not sent for you as a priest, you know. I have my priest here. If God has not given me

absolution through Garth, He won't through you. You may tell this tale where and to whom you will. I used to deny your faith. But I accept it now, because Garth has lived it for me. For three years he has borne my sins, suffered for my sins, and cleansed my sins in his own person; or, as I begin to believe, some Power—some person, if you will—has used him as a vessel through which to work. Garth is the crucible; the Alchemist has stood outside my ken. But Garth has known him, or he couldn't have lived it through. If he needs it you'll help him when I'm gone.'

Father Anthony paused.

"And did you help him?" said the doctor.

"The man died twelve hours later," said the priest slowly. "He died in his son's arms. Garth went to his own room to sleep. I remembered the dead man's words next day at noon: 'if he needs it.' For when I went to call him, reluctantly, because some matter needed his decision, I found my voice and my touch could not reach him any longer. He lay dead on his narrow bed beneath the crucifix; and I believe, having 'lost himself to find himself,' he was crowned, 'far in the spiritual city.'"

HYMN FOR A SOUL IN DARKNESS.

Christ, by Thy Cross, defend this tortur'd soul!
Lord, by Thy Risen Life dispel the Dark.
Great Michael of the Flame, make evil flee;
Gabriel, Comforter, let thy heavenly air
And holy waters bathe this troubled soul.
Raphael, the Healer, be about his path
Through all the spheres.
Let not this trembling mind be loos'd from Christ.
Uriel, four square, the strength of hills and plains,
Make calm his heart as thy fair pasturage.
O Mother-Spirit, pure and holy Dove,
Queen of the waters of the silent Sea,
Breathe in this soul the secret of the peace
Of the Lord's Handmaiden.

Flame of the Mountain, scathe the Dark Orb's power.
Lord of the Fiery Rod and Mystic Stroke,
Loosen this soul from the strong bands of sin;
Lord of the Waters of the Holy Sea
Who guards the sacred Chrism of our God
Defend this soul!
Now by the Star of Peace, O Fatherhood!
Raise from the darkness the frail souls of men.
Curb Thou the restless children of the gloom,
And breathe Thy spirit in Thy child's weak soul;
Link with Thy Will this will, O Changeless One,
That in his heart the son of man be born,
And rise in triumph to the Son of God.
Thou who receivest prayer, Salathiel,
Present the incense of this speechless soul
Before the Throne of God.
Let not the terrors of great Azrael
Pluck Christ's own child from the strait path of Life.
He hath no terrors for the constant mind
That resteth in the light of that fair Star
That riseth in the East.
Give him the Peace,
The Peace of God!

THE PLAYWRIGHT'S STORY

"These little ones who believe in Me."
Gospel of St Mark, ix. 42.

"It was far in the night, and the bairnies grat;
The mither beneath the mools heard that."
Old Song.

THE WORSHIPPER

"'THOU shalt have none other gods but Me,'" said the playwright. "'Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man and taketh man for his defence.' I never see why people make a fuss about the Commination Service, as though 'be' was substituted for 'is.' Why object to a proclamation of Law? Who would worry if it was proclaimed: 'Burnt is he who picketh up a live coal'? The first commandment embodies one of the most awful truths, one of the most fearful in its consequences if it be disregarded."

"Why, bless me," said the doctor, "I never thought to hear such a sentiment from *you* of all men. I shouldn't have judged you to be a very—how shall I put it without offence?—a very strenuous worshipper."

An odd look flitted over the face of the playwright.

"N—no," he said drily, "I dare say not. Perhaps the on-looker sees most of the game."

"And it is a question," said Father Standish, "that needs much thought; there is no greater mistake than to suppose people in England nowadays are all monotheists."

"The craving to worship!" said the playwright, "that is what makes us set up idols. Crash! they come down on our silly heads; we lie there stunned for a little bit; and finally get up—cured."

"Cured—of what?" said the doctor.

"Of worshipping," said the playwright coolly. "And sometimes of love for the 'little tin god.' Not always of that though, thank Heaven!"

He thought for a little.

"I knew a case of that," he said, "years and years ago."

"Years and years ago?" said the priest, with a smile; for the very successful playwright was not quite thirty.

"Years and years ago," repeated the playwright firmly. "Hundreds of years!"

At this point the doctor rose to go; and when he had gone, the playwright became silent. He was staying at Brent, as Father Standish's guest. At last he spoke:

"Yes," he said. "I've seen such a case. I—knew the man to whom it happened rather well. If I tell you the story, you'll know who it was. But I—I mean the man—would like you to know, if you will not talk about it. He wouldn't like it talked about, because the elder man concerned is still alive, and it might—it would—hurt him. But the story is rather instructive, I think. I fancy it is pathetic, too. True stories are generally pathetic, and comic. It has what people call a supernatural element in it too."

Father Anthony looked at his guest for a moment; then he said very quietly and gently:

"I hear so many stories, you know; some of them very strange. I make it a rule never to talk of them unless I have express permission to do so. I should like to hear this one."

"Thank you," said the playwright after a short pause. "And I should like to tell it you. It's a child's story—poor little fool!"

He knocked the ashes from his pipe, laid it down, and began:

"I do not know what made me think of it," he said. "Unless it was the chapel to-night; and your face, perhaps; because you

have faith, and you can and do worship God, and—well! There was a man, a very distinguished and brilliant soldier and explorer; he was not only a popular hero, but he was splendid in all sorts of ways; a man to be respected with all the soul you've got, you understand?"

Father Standish nodded.

"He lost his wife when their first child was only three months old. He loved her dead as he had loved her living. For thirty years he has been true to her memory. When she was gone the only soul on earth he really loved was their child. He loved him better than most people love their children, I fancy. You see?"

"Yes."

"Duty called him abroad when the child was eight, and kept him abroad until four years later. But he wrote to the boy as regularly as he could. He took any amount of pains to keep himself in the child's memory—any amount! He wrote him long letters, perfectly delightful letters. He sent him sketches and photos of the places to which he went, and presents, and—all sorts of things. The boy was at school, of course; he was rather"—the playwright paused—"rather a smart little chap; work was quite easy to him; he was generally at the top of his class. He was popular on the whole; fairly good at games, and he was not of the rebellious, law-breaking sort. No one ever suspected the sort of feeling he had about his father; children—especially boys—don't talk of those things; later, when he *didn't* feel things much—he was supposed to be particularly good at putting feelings into words. But in the days when he *did* feel acutely, he was quite abnormally inarticulate. Now Nature intended that boy, Father Anthony, to be a man with the kind of white-hot, unquenchable love for and faith in God that—well! that you have. You don't expect, and I don't desire, to see that in a boy of twelve; but he had just that very feeling of absolute faith in and love for his absent father, that you have in the Father of all living things. He

remembered him enough for it to be a real love, and absence wove a glamour that fashioned an object of worship. He read everything he wrote, even books on professional matters that he understood no more than he did Chinese. He read everything in the papers about him that he could get hold of; and there was a good deal at that time. When he got the V.C., as he did, he lay awake at night, he was so excited about it. He kept his letters and his photographs and his sketches, and he was, in short, to him the embodiment of omnipotence, omniscience—of everything, in fact, necessary as attributes to a god. He had utter *faith* in him; in his wisdom, goodness, valour, and general benevolence. He did not say so to himself, of course, still less to anyone else; but it was so.

"Just on the eve of his father's return from abroad, the child got into a really bad scrape, much more than an ordinary scrape, for there seemed to be absolutely conclusive proof that he had stolen some money—several pounds. He was frightened and distressed, and he declared quite truly he had not taken it. The headmaster was uncommonly kind to him; he asked him to confess frankly he had taken it, and tell the whole story, for he felt sure, he said, that there must be extenuating circumstances; he had been led into it; would he tell the truth and say he was sorry? He was surprised because the boy did not seem to be in the least ashamed of himself, though he was unhappy and upset. Of course, being innocent, he did not feel ashamed. At last the master told him that, as his father was expected to land in England in two days, he should send him straight to him. There lacked but ten days to the Christmas holidays; he should let the whole matter stand over till the school met again. He thought he would probably tell his father what he would tell no one else; his father could deal with him as he pleased. If the headmaster heard there were any extenuating circumstances, he would not expel him; he was young, and probably did not realise how very serious the matter was. He behaved, in short, like a reasonable, humane, and

experienced human being, who had, all his life, been spared divine honours by everyone.

"As for the child, from the moment he heard he was going to his father, his heart was at rest; he was innocent; his father would know that; in some way, which the boy didn't need to trouble about, he would set everything right. He was perfectly happy in his faith. He was about to fall into the hands of the all-powerful and all-wise deity of his worship. He usually travelled alone, but being a culprit, and in some sort a prisoner, he was sent to his father in charge of the man who was the school drill sergeant and gymnasium instructor. When he reached home the deity of his worship met them in the hall. Now he had not seen this divinity for four years, and therefore he was shy and undemonstrative and quite incapable of showing what he felt. He waited for the god to speak first. The god did not speak to him at all, or take any notice of him. He spoke to the man; asked him by what train he was returning, and bade him go downstairs and get some food.

"Then he said to his son:

"'Go into that room there, Noel.'"

Father Anthony glanced up quickly; then he looked down in silence. The playwright went on:

"The boy went in feeling uneasy and startled; his father followed and shut the door. Then he said: 'Noel, do you realise what you have done? Do you understand at all that you have disgraced yourself and me? What do you expect me to say or do to you? What do you suppose I can feel, to be met with the news that my boy—my only child—is a thief, directly I land in England, after not seeing you for four years? Don't you *feel* what you have done?'

"Father Anthony, I really don't want to be blasphemous; but how would you feel if you suddenly found that God was not omniscient, that He could make mistakes; that He did not know

the truth, or how to manage His universe? Well! the boy literally felt like that."

"Poor little fellow!" said Father Anthony.

"Yes," said the playwright, slowly, and drawing a long breath. "Utter desolation *is* utter desolation, even though it is caused by something silly and inadequate. But he remembered he had not told the god of his innocence; it was odd he should not know it, but still—he said: 'Father, I'm not a thief. I didn't do it.' And the god replied: 'Noel, this thing is proved. If you were not a child, you'd see that. If you think a theft is made better by a lie, you are wrong. Mr Barrington says you do not seem to be ashamed of your action. All I can do is to make you realise that you ought to be.'

"The mere human being seemed to be kinder, and more willing to hear, than the god; that was frightful! That way lay blasphemy! The child felt stunned. He did not speak. His father said: 'It is eight o'clock. You had better go to your room. I shall come up presently and punish you for what you have done; do you hear?'

"'Yes, father,' said the boy feebly.

"'Do you want any supper?' said his father.

"Now, when the trump of doom is sounding, the universe tumbling to pieces, and the elements melting with a fervent heat, Father Anthony, you can see it is an incongruous, nay, a tactless thing, to ask people whether they want supper. The boy said he was not hungry, which was a truth, and went out of the room. Then he remembered he did not know where his bedroom was, and he came back; consider, this was the first night for four years he had been under his father's roof; when I tell you that two months before he had begun to keep a string register on which days were represented by daily loosened knots, I think you'll agree with me that *this* home-coming was—rough on the little chap."

"Very rough on him," said Father Anthony, the most perfect listener ever created by nature and grace.

"When he went back into the room his father was standing on the hearth, his elbows resting on the shelf, and his face buried in his hands. He looked up, and I think he hoped his son was going to say something to improve the state of affairs; he said:

"'Well, Noel, what is it, then?'

"The boy said tremulously: 'I don't know where my room is, father.'

"The man sighed, and said shortly: 'The first door to the left at the top of the stairs.'

"The boy said 'Thank you,' and went away. He found the room; it was a large room, with two big windows, and they were wide open. It was cold weather and beginning to freeze. A big frost that lasted for weeks set in that night. He unpacked what he wanted, and undressed; but he didn't get into bed. He sat down and shivered, and wondered when his father would come, and what he would say or do. He came soon; he said very little, but he gave his boy a whipping. Now you know," said the playwright slowly, "I don't blame him; I think he was probably right to do that; for he was quite sure the theft was proved, and the boy a liar. And he couldn't possibly have guessed how awful the whole thing was to the child. He told him he was to go to bed and to sleep as soon as he could. He saw his son throw himself face downwards on the bed, and clasp the iron bars at the head with his hands as he hid his face in the pillow. He saw him do this as he went out of the room. Then he shut the door and left him alone. Such, you see, Father Anthony, was the condition of the silly little fool of a child; now what was the state of his father? You know we are very cruel to fallible divinities. The boy felt his father to be stripped of every divine attribute with which he had endowed him, save unjustly-wielded power. And the poor unfortunate divinity

went downstairs feeling nearly as miserable as his son. He had been rather severe, because he felt terribly tempted not to be severe at all; the thought that the boy had stolen, and lied about it, was fearful to him; but he loved the child more than he loved anything on earth; he loathed doing what he had done; he had not seen his child for four years, and in the meantime the boy had grown to be so like his dead mother that the man could hardly bear to look at him. During all his busy, stirring life he longed for the presence of the woman who had gone from him. He sat by the fire and worried and tortured himself. He wondered whether he ought to have waited till the morning and talked more with the child before he punished him; he wondered whether he had destroyed his affection for him; he wondered whether he would sleep; he wondered whether he had had anything to eat all day; he wondered whether he had better go up and see him again. And three or four times he rose to go, and then told himself he must not be soft or weak; the boy had done very wrong, and must be shown he was wrong for his own sake. He sat thus for three hours; then he went to his room. He listened at his son's door because he knew that, weak or not weak, if he heard him crying, he should go in and speak to him. But he heard no sound at all, and concluded he was asleep.

"The clock struck a quarter-past twelve; he was beginning to doze, when he woke up suddenly with a most uncanny sensation. He told me someone whom he could not see was leaning on the rail at the foot of his bed, and speaking to him very earnestly. But this person's voice arose in his brain exactly like a thought; only it was quite unmistakably not a thought, but a voice. It said: 'You have made a great mistake; *indeed* you have, dear. You *must* go to him, you really must.' He actually answered it aloud; though, as he told me long afterwards, he thought he was qualifying for Bedlam.

"'I have made no mistake at all,' he said. 'For his own sake

he must be shown he is wrong. Why, if this isn't checked, God knows what the end may be.'"

"The reply of the voice was prompt: 'He is perfectly innocent; and he is speaking the truth. You will know that next week. Do go to him.'

"'Nonsense!' he answered. 'What! wake the poor child up and startle him out of his wits? He's asleep by this time, I hope.'

"'He is not asleep,' replied the voice. 'He is awake; and I tell you he needs you frightfully.'

"Now the man said to himself that something had gone wrong with his nerves. He could not defend himself from the conversation of a person who talked inside his brain; but if he must hear, he need not heed. But the voice ceased to talk. Half-past twelve struck, a quarter to one, one o'clock, a quarter past one; and then—some one came and stood by his side, and laid a hand on his forehead.

"A voice external to him, quiet, and very distinct, said: 'Mark' (the man's Christian name was Markham, and no one, save his wife, ever called him Mark), 'Mark,' said the voice, 'if you do not go to our poor child at once, you will be too late in the morning; and in two or three days I shall have him, and not you.'

"The hand slipped softly from his forehead and stroked his hair, then someone seemed to leave his side and go out of the room quickly. But the voice was the voice he had hungered to hear for twelve years; though it sounded a little stern, and almost fierce in its earnestness. He told me he did not know what he did, till he found himself, half dressed, in the passage, with a candle in his hand. He opened the door of his son's room. It was dark; the candle had burnt out. Then it struck him that the room was icy cold; he saw the two big windows were still wide open. It was a hard frost, and a bitter east wind was blowing straight into the room. He looked for the boy and then he saw he was not in bed; he was lying in just the same position as when he had left him five hours before, clad in a very thin cotton sleeping suit. He went to

the side of the bed and saw he was not asleep; he was shuddering from head to foot as though he had ague.

"The man put the the candle down. 'Noel, child,' he said.

"The boy started, but he did not answer. His father touched his shoulder.

"'Why! you silly boy,' he said. 'This room is like ice, and you're as cold as a stone. You will be very ill. Get up.'

"The boy did not move; so he took hold of his cold, cramped hands, loosened them from the bars they were clutching, and lifted him so that he could see his face. Then he was horrified, for the child had not been crying at all; he had not shed a tear; he was as white as his pillow, and his eyes looked terrified. The man was amazed; he said to himself, quite truly, he had done nothing to put his son into such a state as this. Isn't it one of the worst of life's tragedies, Father Anthony, that we can't, though we be bound by ties of blood, and bound by ties of love, really know each other? How could the man know how his boy had been thinking of him, and counting the days to his home-coming? How could he know in what frame of mind the child had come home to his father; in unwavering faith that all his troubles were over? How could he know the awful shock of the reality after the vision which had been truth to him?

"He gave him a gentle little shake and said: 'Now, isn't this naughty of you, foolish child? didn't I say you were to go to bed?'

"Now the boy was in just that mood when—with a great revulsion of his former feeling—his father's presence, and voice, and touch were a horror to him. He was ill from his five hours' vigil in the bitter cold of the frosty wind, so that all he was able to realise was that this utterly unjust incarnation of divine power and wrath was blaming him for something. He winced, and shrank away from him with a miserable little moan. That was more than his father could bear, and he did, unconsciously, the wisest thing he could have done. He let the boy see how he loved him; he let

him see his own misery; his frightful anxiety and distress. He caught his son in his arms and said: 'Child, child! Don't you know how your father loves you? You ought to! I've tried to show you. Is all that wiped away in a minute? You're just the one thing on earth I love, since your mother died. Don't shrink away from me as though I was a drunken brute who ill-used you. That isn't fair to me. I don't know whether I have been too hard with you, but if I have, Heaven knows I'm punished for it. Don't be afraid of me, little chap; for the love of God, don't be afraid of me!'

"When he spoke like that, it had a most curious effect on his son. The vision of the divine hero who had failed him, vanished, and he saw in its place a human creature who loved him, who was very sorry, who was as unhappy, and in a way as helpless and puzzled, as he was, who was actually appealing to him for help. He gave a little gasp; then he threw his arms round his father's neck and began to cry. The man said, under his breath: 'Thank God for that!'

"He kissed his boy's forehead, and went to shut the windows."

The playwright became silent and thoughtful.

"And what happened after that?" said Father Anthony.

"Oh," said the playwright lightly, as he began to refill his pipe, "after that came a fire half-way up the chimney, hot blankets, boiling hot milk with brandy in it; and the next day, inflammation of the lungs, the doctor, two nurses, and two terms missed at school. The week after the boy was taken ill, it was proved, by an odd combination of circumstances, that he was—as he said—quite innocent of the theft of which he had been accused."

"And what," said Father Anthony, with some hesitation, "what was the state of affairs afterwards between these two?"

The playwright laid down his pipe.

"Oh, *that* was all right!" he said. "Between these two there was—there is—an increasing love and friendship as the years go on. Yes, thank Heaven, *that's* perfectly all right."

"Then what's wrong? Something's wrong?"

"I do not think," said the playwright, "it would be fair to say anything is wrong. Because I do not think anyone is to be blamed. Certainly my—the father, I mean—is not. He was, and is, the best father ever a man had. And he acted, and always has acted, exactly as he should, according to his knowledge and power of judgment. Not many of whom you can say that, eh?"

"Not many."

"Nor do I think it was the boy's fault exactly; because, after all, a child's faith in his father or mother is a beautiful thing and a good thing. But the fact remains: he put absolute faith—the faith which *can*, I suppose, only find rest in the Changeless and Infinite—in the changing and finite; and when the finite was seen, as the finite, with a sudden and most awful shock, the capacity for giving that perfect faith, that intense and reverential love, died."

"Not died," said Father Standish. "No, no, no!"

"You think not? I hope not. But the man feels as though it was dead. And that's clean against his nature. He's lost the keynote of his whole character. Because he has not as the pivot of his life an unchanging belief in, and worship for, a changeless and loving Father of all worlds; because he *can't* get that faith, he is a weaker, a much worse, a less useful man to-day. He knows that. He's lost his *raison d'être*. But what can he do?"

"I am very sorry for—your friend," said Father Standish, "but I think he will get back his faith. No! I think he *has* it, but he doesn't feel it. I am more sorry for his father."

"Oh, he doesn't know, he doesn't know," said the playwright quickly. "Heaven forbid! He'll never know. God bless him!"

THE YOUNG SHEPHERD

ETERNAL Youth! Whose hidden lay
Echoes adown the Path of Life,
Bidding Thy children cease from strife,
To catch Thy music—all who may;
Upon the mountain top, O King,
Round Whose fair head Love's birds do sing,
Thou watchest, patient, as they go,
The wand'ring of Thy silly sheep;
As on their way
They helpless stray;
Nor even know
That, soft and low,
Thy pipe is whisp'ring through their sleep.
From dream into their life it steals;
Out of the dark it soft appeals;
It sings within the holy breast
Of him whom pray'r hath given rest.
It whispers to the sinner: "See
If in thy pain thou find not Me."
Young Shepherd of the Hidden Land!
Within the dawn I see Thee stand,
Thy Crook of Mercy in Thy Hand!
And in the glow of noon, ador'd,
Thou shinest glorious, as the Lord,
In Whose strong grasp a Rod of Might
Guidest Thy children to the right.
At sunset, tender as a maid,
Pure as a babe, Thy lovely smile
Gives peace to hearts that are afraid,
Because they knew Thee not a while.
And at the hour of midnight, Lord,
Thou keepest tireless watch and ward.
The powers of darkness, too, are Thine;
And in Thy Cup the crimson wine
Of all Life's magic is outpour'd.

THE DOCTOR'S STORY

" Into the roots of the roses
Blight comes, quenching their glory.
They spring where no man supposes,
Part of another story.
That is the Soul of a Flower, my dear,
That is the Soul of a Flower.

Deep in yon shed of rough planting,
Thin straw a baby covers.
Friend of sorrow, foe of canting,
Refuge of great lovers:
That is the Soul of Yule, my dear,
That is the Soul of Yule."

J. A. C.

THE BUILDER

One of the rooms at Brent, a room more specially at the service of guests in that House of Quiet, looked on the Forest. There, two days after the playwright had told his elaborately anonymous story to Father Standish, he, the priest, and the doctor sat.

It was an April evening; a wood fire crackled on the big hearth, the windows were open, and the room was full of the smell of the woods, and of the sweetbrier from the cloisters. The playwright, an inveterate smoker, was smoking in the window seat and watching a squirrel; the doctor sat near the fire talking to Father Standish about one of his poor patients who needed sea air. He had come in for that purpose. A piece of the turf road to the pines could be seen from the window; some girls came down it, singing. They were children from a Roman Catholic convent school which was ten miles off. They had been having an Easter picnic, primrosing in the Forest; they were returning to the brakes which were to take them back. As they came they were singing a hymn. Rather in advance walked a tall young girl, swinging her basket of wet moss and primroses like a censer, as she sang in a voice as clear as a blackbird's whistle:

"Mother of Christ, Star of the Sea!
Pray for the wanderer, pray for me!"

The doctor rose and looked out.

"How that brings back the past!" he said. "It reminds me of a curious tale, a thing I came across long ago. The little maid is dead now; years ago she died like a baby going to sleep."

"Would it be indiscreet to ask for the story?" said the playwright.

"No," said the doctor. "It's rather long; and it has to do with a man I met when I was living in the west country. He was a strange type; we used to call him 'the Builder,' partly as a joke. You know we sometimes speak of people in whom the creative faculty is abnormally developed, such as great artists, musicians, and poets, as seeming to belong to a race untouched by the usual characteristics and standards of humanity. Some say that the pursuit of scientific research purely for its own sake has a tendency to dehumanise. This man passed for a philanthropist; he wrote most beautifully; he was very wealthy, and he had all manner of practical schemes in hand, for the good of the Race, with a large R."

"I wish you'd tell us this story," said the playwright.

"I will, if you and Father Standish would like to hear it."

"I should like it," said the priest; "for it is well known that in the matter of stories I have never grown up."

The doctor began at once.

"It was 'out over' I met him, on the moors. I was doctor in a big moorland village. My household consisted of an old woman who was my servant; a deerhound, the most dignified and righteous person I ever knew, with a fixed and uncharitable loathing for evil-doers; a magpie of evil and humorous mind; and a long-legged thievish cat who was a frank bandit. No cats, you know, have really high principles; but most cats desire the world to believe them to be respectable. This arrogant beast didn't care a pin for anyone's opinion.

"The man of whom I speak had a great deal of land, and he had established a 'colony.' Once I was interested in a communal

land scheme which was to establish on earth the kingdom of heaven. It failed because the people failed, and I came out of it feeling that Humanity with a capital H is a shifting sand at its best——"

"So it is," interpolated the playwright.

"A heap of garbage at the worst," continued the doctor.

"But with diamonds hidden in it," said Father Standish.

"I grant it you," said the doctor; "but uncut, and hard to see."

"Ah! you with your faith in human nature," said the playwright drily. "You're a cup of cold water to a hardened cynic such as I am."

"My dear fellow," said Father Standish, holding out a little silver box, "don't you want a light?"

"Badly," said the playwright, taking it. "I wish to God you'd give me one."

"Why, so he has," said the doctor, who was a "plain man." "You've got it in your hand."

"Has he?" said the playwright. "Well! I really believe he has. Very absent-minded of me. Thank you, Father Anthony."

"This man's colony was on quite different lines," proceeded the doctor. "He said we should experiment, in the interests of the future, with those with whom the future lay. He had a sort of model village where little children were trained in accordance with his innumerable theories; and as they grew older they were drafted into a big school where boys and girls were taught together, and later some of the most promising were invited to enter his 'colony,' which was to be the root and model of a race to come. The man interested me immensely. I never saw anyone with such an active and receptive mind. He seemed to let nothing escape him that was a factor in the world. He examined everything; even the most outrageous cranks were noted by him, in case there might be something useful in their ideas."

"Broad-minded?" said the playwright.

"Broad-minded; and a man capable of seeing a big scheme. But—well! you'll see what you think of him as the story proceeds. One morning as I was going out a woman on a bicycle came down the road and swung herself off at my gate. She was a nurse in the 'babies' village.'

"'Are you in a hurry, doctor?' she said. 'I heard a nurse was wanted in the little Convalescent Home here. I know the appointment is in your hands. I am a Catholic, you know, but I thought——"

"'That would make no difference to me,' I said. 'I've no particular religious convictions. (At that time I hadn't.) I thought you were settled in Mr Vansittart's village, nurse."

"'I've left,' she said sharply. 'I can't stand him any longer.'

"'You surprise me,' I said.

"'Oh, doctor,' she broke out, with her Irish blood blazing in her face. 'Have you heard about Eileen? You remember Eileen?'

"I remembered Eileen. She was one of the 'builder's' experiments as to the effect of environment in counteracting heredity. For her mother—'fie on her! never name her!'—was murdered by the child's father, who was executed for the crime. The child did not know this. Eight years ago she was brought to the babies' village, a little curly-headed lass of two. The last time I had seen her she was tearing barefooted along the top of a wall, a tall, thin slip of a nine-year-old girl, her cheeks like pink roses, her eyes like stars, and her little curls dancing in the wind.

"'What's wrong with Eileen?' I asked.

"'My precious little child!' she said. 'Two months ago she fell in the gymnasium, and the doctor says he thinks she will never walk any more.'

"Her eyes filled with tears.

"'My poor little one!' she said. 'She was my special baby;

and he used to make such a pet of her, because she was so funny and clever.'

"'But Mr Vansittart is not to blame because the poor little woman hurts herself, nurse,' I said.

"'No,' she replied. 'But he says she is no good now for his horrid school, or his odious colony; and he has sent her to a smoky town, to a great barrack for crippled children.'

"'Well, nurse,' I answered, 'you know she'll be taken care of there.'

"'Taken care of!' she cried. 'That poor little sick child has been sent away from her *home*; from me, who've been a mother to her ever since she was two; and she has been taken from the moor, and the flowers, and the little animals and things she loves. She was carried downstairs to go away—so weak and ill. That awful man said to her: "Good-bye, Eileen. I'm sorry you have to go. It's a thousand pities you let go that rope, child." And I saw her lip quiver, and she said: "Oh, Mr Vansittart, don't you think perhaps I'll be well enough to come home to the moor when the little chickens and ducks come out? I do *love* that time." What *do* you think that—that *brute* said?'

"'Gently! Gently! nurse,' said I. 'What did he say?'

"'He said: "Truth's the foundation of all things, child. There's no use putting things vaguely. You'll never come back to the moor again. You'll never be well again."

"'She said, in three little gasps:

"'"Oh, Mr Vansittart! Oh!" and I nearly screamed at him: "You incarnate lie! You wouldn't recognise a truth if it was flung at you!" And he wouldn't, for he's always lying to his own soul. I told him after the way he had treated my precious baby, I'd never work for him again. And I've left.'

"'Well, nurse,' I said, 'I think very likely we may manage that post for you. If so, I really don't see why poor Eileen shouldn't come back to you and the moor. I think we might

manage it between us. A little girl of ten doesn't cost so very much to keep in a country village like this.'

"The thing was arranged; the child came back, and she grew much better. She was very delicate, but she could stand and walk a little, and even do little things about the house, which delighted her. She was a beautiful child, poor little thing! She had a face like a white flower, it was so delicate and pure. Her hair ran into little golden rings like a halo round her head, and her eyes, which were just the colour of those little gentian blue flowers that grow on the moor, grew more wonderful every day. But her illness had changed her; she had been a merry, romping little thing, an innocent 'pickle'; now she was much quieter, and more dreamy and sensitive. She was the gentlest, simplest, least self-conscious and vain of living beings; she was quite fearless, with the friendly fearlessness of a very little child; she had an immense love of animals, especially birds, and of flowers; she was wonderfully in touch with Nature, and seemed to feel the *consciousness*, if I might put it so, of things to which we do not attribute consciousness; I mean 'the moods of Nature,' like the rain, and the raging of a storm, and a soft, high gale, and a still, sunshiny day; they reflected themselves in her, as though she knew what they meant. When she was about thirteen she began to talk quite naturally and simply about 'the people of the moor,' and describe great living forms of flame, and all manner of strange things. Whether she really did see some living powers of Nature, or whether they were the pictures made by a very sweet, pure, and imaginative child-mind, I don't know. She never saw anything to frighten her; she used to coax the nurse to let her sleep out in the garden in summer, and once right out on the hills by a little dark tarn, that she might watch her 'angel and fairy people,' as she called them.

"One day, when she was just fourteen, Vansittart came over to see me on business. He came to my house and entered the garden cautiously. He was cautious because of my deerhound, who, for

some inexplicable reason, went straight for his throat the first time he came in. The cat was queer too; he seemed to fascinate her, though she would never let him touch her; she used to come and sit and look at him, and stare—and stare—and stare—with her uncanny green eyes. The magpie had some satanic joke concerning him; it used to light on the back of his chair, and chuckle.

"'Is your dog all right, Morton?' he said.

"'On the chain,' I answered. 'Come in.'

"He came in; and in the course of our talk I found he had changed his ideas on many subjects; he was studying some views of life which are springing up increasingly about us; and he was much interested in the 'new psychology,' and its probable bearing upon the future of the race. He was disposed to accept the theory of reincarnation as a clue to life's problems. I think it a clue myself."

"It can be held as an opinion," said Father Standish. "It is not an article of faith."

The playwright screwed up his mouth, and his eyes twinkled. Father Standish saw him; he did not speak, but he looked at him and smiled.

"I beg your pardon, Father Anthony," said the playwright penitently, "I'm truly sorry. Forgive me."

Father Standish smiled and nodded; and the doctor continued:

"'I strolled with him down the street, and saw Eileen in the garden at the Home. 'You've never seen Eileen since she left you,' I said. 'Won't you speak to her?'

"For I knew the child had felt Vansittart's indifference to her; he had taken so much notice of her before her illness.

"'Eileen?' he said. 'Ah yes! you've exemplified this great principle of Brotherhood, Morton, in the case of the individual; my task is rather with the whole than with the part, you know.'

"It seemed rather a 'large order' for one man! 'It's most noble of you,' he said.

"That kind of talk makes me ill! A few shillings a week towards the keep of a sick child in the place where she's happy. Such bosh!

"'Come and see the poor little maid,' I said.

"'I'm pressed for time,' he said. 'Life's so full, isn't it? Well! just a minute.'

"So I led him in. Eileen turned pink with pleasure, and he seemed to forget he was pressed for time. As we walked down the street he said:

"'The splendid physical promise is gone, of course. She was exceptionally well-made and vigorous, if you remember. But from another point of view! A most interesting little face. Those eyes are extraordinary. Quite extraordinary!'

"A week later I dropped into the Home, and found the nurse sewing in her sitting-room.

"'Where's Eileen?' I said.

"'In the garden,' she answered. And I saw the child walking to and fro, picking some flowers and singing in a thin, sweet, unearthly little voice. She sang a hymn which the nurse taught her and the vicar disapproved, but it seemed to appeal to the child. She sang—

'O! by Gabriel's Ave
Utter'd long ago,
Eva's name reversing
'Stablish peace below.
Virgin of all virgins!
To thy shelter take us;
Gentlest of the gentle,
Chaste and gentle make us.'

"'How is she?' I asked. Eileen was like my child to me; I used to see her every day.

"'I sometimes wish she was a boy,' she answered.

"'Why?' I asked.

"'Well! life's easier for a man than a woman,' she said. "'Women are more complex and more morbid, doctor. A man wouldn't feel that dreadful parentage so much if he found it out, which I pray she never may. Not that *I* want the precious lamb changed; I like her as she is. I wish Mr Vansittart wouldn't come and see her.'

"'Does he come?' I asked.

"'Yes,' she replied. 'He talks to her in the garden. He has brought her fruit, and a fluffy kitten. I wish he was at Jericho! She told him about her "angel people" she fancies she sees, and I feel as though he was investigating her with an eye to his horrid schemes and plans. He has talked his reincarnation rubbish to her, and she thinks it is true.'

"The nurse always spoke of that hoary and reasonable belief as 'reincarnation rubbish.'

"At this moment the child came in with her kitten.

"'Mr Vansittart gave you that, baby heart?' I said. I used to call her so, and the name fitted her somehow.

"'Isn't he kind?' she said. 'I told him about my angel people; he asked me whether I ever saw dead people, and I said I didn't think so; they're all alive.'

"'You'd better go to bed, Eileen,' said the nurse hurriedly. 'You're looking tired, darling.'

"And the child obeyed her.

"A few days later the nurse came to me in a fearful state of distress.

"'Doctor,' she said, 'I knew that man would do harm. He has told Eileen the frightful story of her parentage.'

"'What!' I said. 'Impossible!'

"'It's true!' she answered. 'He began talking to her of past lives and past actions drawing people to certain environments and to certain parentage. Then he said he had heard it was possible to

recover memory of such things, and explain problems of incongruous relationships; and then he told her of her own case, and asked her whether she had any memories or visions of—— I came in and found Eileen crying as I never saw her cry in my life; it took me an hour to find out what had happened.'"

The playwright rose.

"Look here!" he said. "If this story of yours is a tragedy, I'm going. I can't stand child tragedies. I'm fond of children, especially of little girls."

"You sit down!" said the doctor. "You're the very man who should hear it. What's the value of a playwright if he's not a psychologist?"

"I haven't discovered the value of a playwright yet," said the playwright meekly. He re-seated himself.

"'I went to have tea there next day,' said the doctor. 'The nurse was out, and Eileen was laying the cloth for a "sit down" nursery tea. She had a scared, strained look on her face. I did not pretend I did not know what had happened. I took her hands and said: 'You must not worry about this nonsense, little woman!' 'It is not nonsense,' she said faintly. 'It is true, and what is so dreadful is to think of the fearful thing I must have done to deserve it. Mr Vansittart says, according to the theory, it must have been some awful thing in my past.'

"Now, I entertain the idea of reincarnation and a law of cause and effect, but I own I object to hear a little starry-eyed girl-child talking about her past.

"'Baby heart,' I said, 'I do not know the dark secrets of your past; but I am quite sure that in your immediate future there should be bread and water for tea instead of that junket, for talking such dreadful nonsense.'

"She laughed.

"'I made it,' she said, 'and now you shall not have any, for saying such an unkind thing to me.'

"'You are getting to be dreadfully old and clever, Eileen,' I said.

"She laughed again; then the strained, worried look came back.

"'You know,' she said, 'I never thought of seeing anything but my lovely angel people, like flames, and the little things, the tiny little trooping creatures. It was all out of doors. But now I am afraid. And yet it seems so cruel to be afraid of them, poor things! poor things! and my own, too!'

"'Afraid of whom, child?' I said.

"'Of—those—dead—people,' she said in shivering little jerks. 'Of—my mother—and of—him. Oh, did you know—did you know—how he died? Mammy said the dead were at rest with God. *They* can't be. And what I did—that must draw them still—to me—to me. Oh, *what* did I do? What *shall* I do?'

"She shivered, and looked at me with frightened, tearless eyes.

"'Dear little girl,' I said, 'all this is only theory.'

"'But what he told me about *them* was true!' she whispered. Of course I could not deny that. She sighed. 'You shall have your junket, and mine too,' she said, trying to smile. 'I feel so tired. Will you tell mammy I've gone to lie down? I don't want any tea.'

"'You do too much in the house, child,' I said.

"'No,' she answered gently. '*That* hasn't tired me.'

"If I had not something to tell you at the end which will mitigate the tragedy," said the doctor, looking at the playwright, "I should not dare to tell you what happened next. I know exactly what happened from Vansittart, who was quite candid about it. He was very anxious to understand Eileen's visions: their source, their nature—above all, their *use*; whether they were connected with her injured health, or were faculties which would be common to the race in the course of time. He was most anxious to know

whether true pictures of the past were revealed thus. He bought an old crystal, said to have been used in Egypt, and took it to Eileen. He asked her to look in it. She took it, trembling. She was in a highly nervous and ultra-sensitive state. Now what she saw I do not know. That she saw 'the awful thing she had done' I flatly disbelieve. I think the active mind of the man had formed a theory about her; and when she took the thing which he had been handling and with which he had been experimenting, she either *saw* that theory, or gained a sense of it which was akin to sight. It opened up an awful vision of the dark and terrible side of life: a vision which her sensitive and childish mind had never realised as possible. Much that had been for her non-existent rushed down on her like a torrent. She flung the crystal across the garden as though she had gone mad, and fainted. She lay insensible for ten days. The state she was in when she recovered consciousness nearly broke the nurse's heart, until the thing came to her which comforted her, and made her feel that the state of Eileen had been brought about deliberately as a protection for the child—the most perfect and peace-giving protection that could have been devised for her; while the blossom of her white child-soul bloomed 'where no man supposes,' 'part of another story,' that the 'Builder,' as we called him, could not touch. For I believe this little Eileen was one of the true Builders; and the current of her real life flowed on unseen with her 'angel people.' This 'witless little one,' for ever a child as regards this world; with not a penny she could call her own, with no power whatsoever save that of winning love, child of a harlot and a murderer; *she* was the Builder, and the man's work was a tinsel show—dross in the crucible of God. For it's the things not seen that are eternal. I do believe that with all my soul; I could not bear to speak of or remember the child, if I did not believe it. She woke up with an extraordinary loss of memory. Not solely that she did not remember the past, but as though a sponge was being constantly

passed over the records of her mind. She remembered for about half an hour; then the thing was gone. She knew us, but I am sure she never thought of us when we were not there. She seemed to have halved her age; she was like a very gentle, docile child of seven. She was quite happy, and her health was better. She never spoke of her angel people: once when the nurse asked her where she had been, she said she had been playing 'with that child in the orchard'; we did not dare to ask her what she meant. One advantage of her state was that life was full of little happy surprises; she met my dog, her kitten, and the magpie every day as a new discovery. A thing worth mentioning was the behaviour of the bandit cat; from the day that Eileen lost her memory that cat brought her presents—poached rabbits of a tender age. I don't know whether she thought her incapable of supporting herself, and feared we should not feed her. If so, it did an otherwise most depraved animal great credit. Her action preserved her from being cut off in her sins; she died—totally unrepentant—in her bed at last. For Farmer Widdicomb, who was fond of Eileen and used to send her cream, spared that cat's life in consequence, when he caught her red-handed in his coppice. 'Thiccy cat du zim so wise as a Christian,' he said. 'Ees fai! her du!" He would have felt as though he was shooting a district visitor. The cat showed her contempt for his weakness by bringing Eileen one of his young chickens the next day. There was no sentimentality about the cat; in Widdicomb's place she'd have pulled the trigger without a qualm. The deerhound had his sentimentalities and fine feelings; she never minded how she insulted and robbed him; she knew he flew at high game, and was too much of an aristocrat to bite a low wretch of a thievish cat."

"Those are the happy people who get on in the world," said the playwright.

"She will, when she's human," replied the doctor. "Until she comes a most tre—men—dous cropper, and then the rabbits she

stole for Eileen will save her soul. It was odd; the fourteen-year-old Eileen would have grieved over the little dead bodies; the seven-year-old, and wiser, Eileen did not grieve, she seemed to penetrate the good intention of that abandoned poacher. When things had been thus during a month the poor little nurse came in one morning and began to walk up and down my room and cry. 'Now there's no good doing that,' I said. 'It doesn't help the little lassie a bit, you know.'

"'I know,' she said, drying her eyes. 'I can't break down when I'm with her, for fear of frightening her. And that's so hard. But I will never, never forget what God showed me last night. Oh, I'm a wicked, faithless woman!'

"'You'll pull through on Judgment Day,' I said; for she was as good a little creature as ever utterly refused to look at a point of view she did not like.

"'I can't think, Dr Morton,' she replied, 'how a really good man can be so flippant.'

"'The flippancy doesn't extend beyond the tip of the tongue,' I made answer.

"'I was in a dreadful state about Eileen last night,' she said, her lip trembling. 'It did seem so cruel, doctor—so cruel from first to last: the dreadful parentage; her accident, and the fearful pain and ruined health, and then—this. Oh! I felt wicked, and I cried myself half blind. At last I went to sleep. And all of a sudden I was in our orchard here; the apple trees were in bloom, and I heard the bees humming in them; the grass was full of blue-bells, and the fantail pigeons were running about. All round the orchard rose our great still moors. I heard the larks singing, and in a hole in the bank I saw a thrush's nest with three blue eggs. Then, on the grass, beneath a blossoming tree I saw a woman sitting. Doctor, I supposed it must have been Our Blessed Lady, only she was not like a human woman, and yet—she was. It was the Motherhood of the World, an Ever-Virgin Motherhood, that

sat there. She was clothed in white, and all round her swept a great blue cloak. Such a cloak! It was a living thing, and the pattern changed and changed; but the woman did not change; and you felt she could not do so. On her shoulder a wee wee wren sat and twittered. Its nest was near. And then I saw my child was lying in her arms, and she was fast asleep. I saw her little white face and closed eyes; her head lay on the woman's breast, and I saw the shining rings of her hair against the blue cloak. And the woman looked at me. Her eyes were both young and old, sad and glad, and deep, deep, deep as the sea. She said in a sweet voice: "Daughter, why weepest thou? Thy child sleeps in my arms, and look! her heart waketh in the heart of my Son." Then I saw my child's heart like a little rose-pink flame, but it was hidden in a greater Heart of Fire, and the fire streamed out and touched the grass and the apple trees and the blue flowers and the pigeons and—and—everything. And just then I heard her voice singing, but it was not her sleeping lips that sang. I heard it coming nearer and nearer from the top of the apple orchard; though she still slept in those arms, I saw her awake and walking among the flowers, and a little child was dragging her along, as children do. She was singing:

"He that is down need fear no fall;
He that is low, no pride;
He that is humble, ever shall
Have God to be his guide."

But when she came near I saw—Oh, I saw Who the Child was Who led her; for He grew tall, and it was a Man—a Man of Sorrows who knew our griefs because He had grieved, and our tears because He had wept, and our gladness because He is Joy, and our sin because He had groaned beneath its load. And then—then—then He was a little Child again leading my darling under the blossoming trees of our orchard. And I felt what does it matter if my little one sleeps to all the earthly things she might

have had? which might, He knows! have failed her; if she sleeps in the arms of that motherhood, and her heart wakes, whether she feels and knows it or not, in the changeless Heart of God; what does it matter if we can never teach her of our foolish knowledge, our narrow brains, our cold, shallow hearts, if she learns her lessons under these blossoming trees, hand in hand with—with—with ——" And she hid her face in her hands and sobbed."

Without the slightest warning the playwright flung his pipe into the grate, got up, and walked out of the room.

"Bless—my—soul," said the doctor, after a bewildered pause. "Has he lost a child or anything? I'm awfully sorry!"

"No, he's not married."

"Upon my word!" said the doctor, "you *never* know when you have people. His manner is so light and careless, and his plays so smart and cynical, I thought he hadn't a soft spot in him. To speak frankly, I couldn't imagine how he came to be here. I should have thought he would have been bored. I thought he was a man who neither had faith nor wanted to have it. When he said that about being unable to stand tragedies, I thought it pure bosh! I'm sorry I told this story before him."

"Don't be sorry," said Father Standish quietly; "because I am particularly glad. And I'm pretty sure he is, too."

TO THE HEART OF GOD

Within Thy Heart, O Holy One of God,
  Make us to rest:
Within Thy still and changeless Heart, O Lord,
  Not on Thy Breast.
Thou willest It shall tremble with our woes,
  Renouncing peace.
Feeling our joys that we may find our home,
  Where dreams shall cease.
Within Thy Heart may we find earthly shows
  Close garner'd there by Thee;

The saints we honour'd, sinners whom we lov'd,
  We in Thy Heart shall see.
Within the still and changeless Light of Truth,
  The Wisdom from above,
We shall give honour where we lov'd and wept,
  And to the honour'd—love.

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